GREAT MANAGERS NOTICE WHAT WORKS

127 IDEAS TO GET MORE OF WHAT WORKS
BY NOTICING WHAT WORKS

LEAD THROUGH STRENGTHS



SO WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH RECOGNITION & MOTIVATION?

You have a problem: being a great manager is tough. You're responsible for big business results. Yet your calendar is overbooked, your budget is small, and your team always seems to need extra motivation.

According to Gallup, only 13% of employees worldwide are fully engaged on the job. That means a full 87% are not digging their careers. No wonder you have so many people just getting by with the minimum effort required. No wonder most teams have at least one "prisoner," out to sabotage your progress at every turn.

Few employees go into a job with the intention of performing poorly or not caring. It happens over time. After months getting feedback with the implied or message, "not it," "not it," "not it," they begin to give up because they don't know how to meet your expectations.

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People are complicated. And they reject one-size-fits-all management. Good news. There's hope. And it comes in the form of natural talents. See, if you uncover your team's talents and turn them into repeatable strengths, your team's performance will improve. Simultaneously, your employees get the benefit of feeling more ease, enjoyment, and productivity at work every day.

To focus on team performance you have to focus on the people performing the work. When you intentionally Notice What Works, you send a clear message. That message is, "I like when you do that. Do more of that." It helps employees know what you want to see from them. And it's easily repeatable because they've already done it in the past.

It's much easier for employees to build on natural talents than to turn into someone new. As a leader, you should focus on spotting what works because it is repeatable and return on investment is high.

So let's get to it. Here are some scripts and conversation starters so you can notice what works! There are 127 ideas here, so there's something to fit every style.



To get more no-cost resources, keep an eye on the **Lead Through Strengths** site. We have manager **mini-courses, interviews,** and **articles** that will help you lead your team through their strengths.



SCRIPTS & EASY-PEASY IDEAS FOR NOTICING WHAT WORKS ON YOUR TEAM

IDEAS 01-10 FOR WHAT TO NOTICE

01	Doing more than expected
02	Setting a productive or positive tone for the team
03	Lending a hand to a teammate
04	Doing something no one else could have done
05	Making a customer happy
06	Taking a risk to develop themselves
07	Setting you up for the future and not focusing only on fire drills
08	Expanding the business
09	Bringing a breakthrough idea
10	Sharing a skill you didn't know they had



IDEAS 11-29 FOR NOTICING WITH PUN-LADEN MEMENTOS

If you have a funny bone or a goofy streak, here are some ideas for noticing what works in a lighthearted way:

THE MEMENTO	THE HEADLINE
Basket of figs or peaches	"It's The Pits Without You Here" as a welcome back to someone who has been out of the office
A Letter 'U' and a small rock	"You Rock" for any celebration of achievement – the 'U' can be a magnet or wooden letter from an old toy box, or even a written shape
Pasta pack	"Thanks For Using Your Noodle" for someone who brought an exceptional idea to the team
Coins	"You're So Money" with a note of appreciation about something specific someone did great
Gum or chewy candy	"I Would Chews You Every Time" as a welcome for a new hire employee
Furniture polish	"You're So Polished" to recognize a well-rehearsed presentation or smooth handling of a challenge
Gift pack of nuts	"It's Nuts Around Here" with a note of appreciation about how they're adaptable or how they tame the chaos
Window cleaner or reading glasses	"Ahhh The Clarity" when you were blurry on a topic and someone brought clarity to the situation
Twix candy bar	"You Deserve a Break Today" with the rest of the day off or a long lunch or a spa treatment
Jelly beans	"It Has Bean A Joy" to celebrate success at the end of a project
Apple	"You're The Apple of [Client Name]'s Eye" to appreciate someone who gets great remarks from a client
Screwdriver or small hand tool	"You're such a fixer upper" to thank someone for finding a solution to a problem that really needed fixed
Cookie	"You're A Smart Cookie" to appreciate someone's excellent ability to analyze or generate valuable ideas

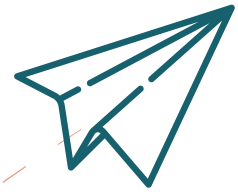
THE MEMENTO	THE HEADLINE
Zero chocolate bar	"Zero Errors" for a metric you're focused on that requires a low number – use this to celebrate a month of zero errors or zero turnover
Any dessert	"It's a Treat Working With You" to celebrate someone's attitude
Golf tees	"You Tee'd Up A Great Kickoff" to appreciate someone's ability to spark engagement at the beginning of an initiative
Cadbury Egg	"Eggcelent Work" with a specific reference about a job well done
Jump rope	"Thanks For Jumping In" to appreciate someone for volunteering or seamlessly integrating into an existing project
Jar of jam	"You Got Us Out of A Jam" with a thank you note about an action that got the team unstuck or helped you overcome a challenge
Toy tops	"You're Tops" for someone who won a competition or did something excellent that week



IDEAS 30-77 For Noticing Characteristics You Love

To spark ideas for what to actually notice, think through each person on your team and write down a few of these you can likely spot this week.

- Accepting
- Adaptable
- Analytical
- Audience Focused
- Authentic
- Brave
- Broad Thinking
- Careful
- Cautious
- Change Master
- Cheerful
- Compassionate
- Connected
- Consistent
- Courageous
- Creative
- Critical Thinker
- Curious
- Dignified
- Disciplined
- Empathetic
- Energetic
- Engaging
- Enthusiastic
- Fast
- Fair
- Focused
- Forgiving
- Fun-loving
- Futuristic
- Generous
- Gritty
- Integrity-guided
- Intelligent
- Lighthearted
- Loving
- Respectful
- Organized
- Persistent
- Playful
- Positive
- Pragmatic
- Purposeful
- Responsible
- Self-Controlled
- Self-Assured
- Wise
- Zealous







IDEAS 78-87 FOR NOTICING WHAT WORKS WITH EASY PHRASES

If you worry that you don't have a way with words, here are some phrases you can use to notice their actions as they happen.

- I love when you _____
- You have a knack for _____
- You have such _____ swag
- I noticed that you _____
- You're the best at _____
- It's so great we have your _____ on this team
- Watching you _____ is like a master class
- Your way of _____ is so impressive
- I appreciate your ability to _____
- Dang! Your ability to _____ is like magic



IDEAS 88-97 FOR BUILDING YOUR CULTURE OF APPRECIATION BY NOTICING RELATIONSHIP ACTIONS

- Someone who listened to understand rather than focusing on what they'd say next
- A person who helped someone when it isn't technically their role
- A time when someone remembers something special to someone else (like an anniversary or that someone really loves Gantt Charts)
- To thank someone for thinking of you, whether it's something simple like sending you an article you'd like or for telling you that the new lunch spot down the street carries your favorite candied carrots
- A person who is there for another teammate when they needed to be out of the office

- An offer of advice or information that saved you time
- Someone living into their unique talents
- A thoughtful helping hand, like holding a door for someone with a handful of things to carry into the office
- Someone who encouraged a teammate trying something new
- A person who shared a learning experience that will save team members hassle in the future

IDEAS 98-127 FOR NOTICING WHAT THEIR ACTIONS DID FOR YOU

Be sure to be specific. Saying, "I really appreciated when you ____" goes a lot further than, "good job." And it helps them know what you want to see more of so that, well, you can see more of that in the future. Your formula for noticing is: I was _____ when you _____. Make up your own. Use your words and phrases so they sound authentic. Here are some idea sparks. Mix and match the left column with the right column.

I WAS _____	WHEN YOU _____
Amazed	Offered that insight
Appreciative	Took our intern under your wings
Captivated	Increased this month's revenue
Charmed	Volunteered for such a big project
Compelled	Created meaning in our meeting
Dazzled	Made an experience out of the customer meeting
Delighted	Kept a smile during such a trying process
Ecstatic	Covered for [teammate's name]
Elated	Raised your opposing points so respectfully
Enchanted	Got this languishing project to the finish line
Excited	Were so on top of [job responsibility]
Fascinated	Created such a scalable process

I WAS _____	WHEN YOU _____
Happy	Worked so accurately through the details of the project
Honored	Brought the battling parties together
Inspired	Saved us so much money
Giddy	Made [teammate or customer] feel so comfortable
Gladdened	Brightened our ideas when we were stuck
Grateful	Boosted our company image
Gratified	Noticed our faulty assumptions
Jazzed	Made [teammate or customer] feel so cared for
Moved	Got the project team moving
Over the moon	Approached the task so enthusiastically
Overjoyed	Improved our plan
Privileged	Encouraged [teammate] when he/she felt bummed
Psyched	Jumped on the opportunity to grow from this experience
Pumped	Controlled the madness
Surprised	Identified significant risks we had missed
Thankful	Maximized our productivity
Thrilled	Found the right words to influence [person or team name]
Touched	Beat the deadline by a mile
Soothed	Innovated like crazy on the [project name] initiative
Speechless	Focused so intently during all of the recent distractions
Struck	Gave us a useful way to decide and get unstuck
Surprised	Trained [teammate or customer] with your best insights

MAKE IT A HABIT

Here are a couple of ideas for systemizing your appreciation of what works:



- Mark a recurring 30-minute spot on your calendar to notice as many people on your team as possible each week.
- Put 3 coins in your pocket. You know you hate carrying those around. As you notice something that day, big or small, remove a coin. Try to empty your pocket every day. Imagine, on a team of 10, that's only one small comment to them 1-2 times per week. Then when you have constructive feedback to give them, you won't feel like you only talk to them when you have something critical to say.

Many managers wait to recognize what works until a significant accomplishment has happened. Even though they notice things, they're afraid to recognize them formally.

Managers tell us it's because they don't want people to get full of themselves. Or there's not enough time. Or they don't want people to think that they're patronizing.

The story from employees is different. They tell us that they only hear from their bosses when they do something wrong. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the #1 reason people leave their jobs is that they don't feel appreciated. Most teams wallow in what's wrong rather than what works.

NOTICING WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE TEAM	NOTICING WHAT WORKS WITH THE TEAM
Focus on each person's problems, weaknesses, gaps, and deficiencies	Focus on each person's talents, strengths, wins, and potential
Analyze root cause of each weakness or problem so that it doesn't happen again; create universal standards	Imagine what could be if you used more of what works and more of what engages each person's unique genius
Implement solutions and prevention for problems through corrective action	Innovate a new picture of the future by using each person's unique talents

A Gallup poll tells us why. **They found that 65% of Americans reported receiving zero recognition for good work in the last year.**

There's actually a sweet spot for recognition. Researchers Fredrickson and Losada found that anything less that 3 positive to 1 negative impedes productivity. They also found that over 13:1 and you'll worsen performance. That's likely because you'll seem disingenuous. So aim for a 5:1 ratio of positive feedback to constructive feedback.

Happy noticing! Please drop me a line at **lisa@leadthroughstrengths.com** to let me know what works best. I'd love to hear how your team members react to your appreciation.

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